

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-73. CANCELED

74. (new) A method of creating and storing an electronic rental contract for a rental vehicle from a rental car company to permit a user to bypass a rental counter of a car rental facility when creating the electronic rental contract, the method comprising:

hosting a website on a server system, the website comprising a plurality of web pages for access over a network by any of a plurality of client systems;

creating a rental vehicle reservation in response to data received through the website from a client system;

storing a reservation transaction within the server system, wherein the reservation transaction is representative of the created rental vehicle reservation;

electronically accepting additional data from a user for a potential rental of a rental vehicle based on the rental vehicle reservation;

communicating an electronic rental proposal for display to the user, the electronic rental proposal being based on the rental vehicle reservation and the accepted additional data;

creating an electronic rental contract for a rental vehicle in response to an electronic acceptance by the user of the electronic rental proposal, thereby resulting in the user bypassing the rental counter when creating the electronic rental contract; and

storing a rental transaction within the server system, wherein the rental transaction is representative of the created electronic rental contract; and

wherein the electronically accepting, communicating, electronic rental contract creating and rental transaction storing steps are performed regardless of whether the user has a pre-existing master rental agreement with the rental car company.

75. (new) The method of claim 74 wherein the electronically accepting, communicating, electronic rental contract creating and rental transaction storing steps are performed for a user who does not have a pre-existing master rental agreement with the rental car company.

76. (new) The method of claim 75 further comprising:
allocating a rental vehicle to the user at the car rental facility in accordance with the electronic rental contract without requiring the user to visit the rental counter.

77. (new) The method of claim 75 wherein the communicating step comprises communicating the electronic rental proposal for display to the user on an automated kiosk located in the car rental facility, and wherein the electronic rental contract creating step comprises receiving the electronic acceptance from the user through the kiosk.

78. (new) The method of claim 77 wherein the electronically accepting step comprises electronically accepting the additional data from the user through the kiosk.

79. (new) The method of claim 78 wherein the additional data comprises driver's license information for the user and credit card payment information for the user, the method further comprising:

electronically performing a first validation operation on the driver's license information such that the communicating step is not performed should the first validation operation indicate the driver's license information is invalid;

should the first validation operation indicate the driver's license information is invalid, electronically requesting that the user re-submit new driver's license information;

electronically performing a second validation operation on the credit card payment information such that the communicating step is not performed should the second validation operation indicate the credit card payment information is invalid; and

should the second validation operation indicate the credit card payment information is invalid, electronically requesting that the user re-submit new credit card payment information.

80. (new) The method of claim 78 wherein the electronically accepting step further comprises receiving identification information for the user at the kiosk, the method further comprising:

retrieving the stored reservation transaction in response to the received user identification information; and

providing information about the retrieved reservation transaction to the kiosk for display thereon.

81. (new) The method of claim 80 further comprising:

electronically soliciting the additional data from the user through the kiosk.

82. (new) The method of claim 80 wherein the user identification information receiving step comprises receiving a driver's license number from the user through the kiosk.

83. (new) The method of claim 80 wherein the kiosk comprises a printer, the method further comprising:

delivering a print stream to the printer for printing a receipt and summary for the created electronic rental contract.

84. (new) The method of claim 83 wherein the print stream includes data for printing directions for the user to obtain a rental vehicle at the car rental facility in accordance with the created electronic rental contract.

85. (new) The method of claim 78 wherein the additional data comprises a modification of a data item from the reservation.

86. (new) The method of claim 75 wherein the additional data comprises driver's license information for the user, the method further comprising:

electronically performing a validation operation on the driver's license information such that the communicating step is not performed should the validation operation indicate the driver's license information is invalid; and

should the validation operation indicate the driver's license information is invalid, electronically requesting that the user re-submit new driver's license information.

87. (new) The method of claim 86 wherein the driver's license information comprises an identification of a state for a driver's license and a plurality of digits that are representative of a driver's license number, wherein the validation operation performing step comprises electronically checking whether the driver's license number digits conform to a valid digit pattern for the state corresponding to the state identification.

88. (new) The method of claim 75 wherein the additional data comprises credit card payment information for the user, the method further comprising:

electronically performing a validation operation on the credit card payment information such that the communicating step is not performed should the validation operation indicate the credit card payment information is invalid; and

should the validation operation indicate the credit card payment information is invalid, electronically requesting that the user re-submit new credit card payment information.

89. (new) The method of claim 88 wherein the credit card payment information comprises a credit card number and name of a credit card holder, wherein the validation operation performing step comprises electronically checking whether the credit card holder's name matches a name for a primary driver with respect to the potential rental.

90. (new) The method of claim 75 wherein the additional data comprises driver's license information for the user and credit card payment information for the user, the method further comprising:

electronically performing a first validation operation on the driver's license information such that the communicating step is not performed should the first validation operation indicate the driver's license information is invalid;

should the first validation operation indicate the driver's license information is invalid, electronically requesting that the user re-submit new driver's license information;

electronically performing a second validation operation on the credit card payment information such that the communicating step is not performed should the second validation operation indicate the credit card payment information is invalid; and

should the second validation operation indicate the credit card payment information is invalid, electronically requesting that the user re-submit new credit card payment information.

91. (new) The method of claim 75 wherein the additional data comprises a modification of a data item from the reservation.

92. (new) The method of claim 74 further comprising:

after the reservation creating step, electronically receiving input from the user indicative of a request to convert the created reservation into an electronic rental contract; and

responsive to the received input, providing a first web page of the website to a client system for display thereon, wherein the first web page is configured to solicit the additional data from the user.

93. (new) The method of claim 92 further comprising:

after the reservation creating step, providing a second web page of the website to the client system for display thereon, wherein the second web page is configured to provide the user with a user-selectable option to only create the reservation and a user-selectable option to convert the created reservation into an electronic rental contract; and

wherein the input receiving step comprises receiving a user selection of the option to convert the created reservation into an electronic rental contract, thereby advancing the user to the first web page.

94. (new) The method of claim 92 further comprising:

after the reservation creating step, sending an email to the user, wherein the email comprises (1) a confirmation of the created reservation, and (2) a user-selectable link that is effective upon user selection to link the user to the first web page; and

wherein the input receiving step comprises receiving a user selection of the link.

95. (new) The method of claim 92 further comprising:
automatically pre-filling at least a portion of the additional data into a web page of the website from a rental history associated with the user.
96. (new) The method of claim 95 further comprising:
receiving a selection by the user of a button on the web page; and
responsive to the button selection, performing the pre-filling step.
97. (new) The method of claim 92 further comprising:
automatically performing a suggestive sell for the potential rental through a web page of the website based on a rental history associated with the user.
98. (new) The method of claim 97 wherein the suggestive sell is for an optional coverage item for the potential rental.
99. (new) The method of claim 74 further comprising:
for a user who has a pre-existing master rental agreement with the rental car company,
(1) providing a first web page of the website to a client system for display thereon, wherein the first web page is configured to solicit the data for creating the reservation from the user, and (2)
automatically pre-filling at least a portion of the data for creating the reservation into the first web page from the master rental agreement.
100. (new) The method of claim 99 further comprising:
permitting the user to electronically modify the pre-filled data without modifying the master rental agreement.
101. (new) The method of claim 100 further comprising:
receiving a modification of the pre-filled data from the user through the website; and
electronically notifying the user with a selectable option to keep the modification and a selectable option to revert to the pre-filled data.

102. (new) The method of claim 101 wherein the pre-filled data does not include credit card information from the master rental agreement.

103. (new) The method of claim 74 wherein the server system is operated by the rental car company.

104. (new) A system for creating and storing an electronic rental contract for a rental vehicle from a rental car company to permit a user to bypass a rental counter of a car rental facility when creating the electronic rental contract, the system comprising a server system configured to:

- host a website, the website comprising a plurality of web pages for access over a network by any of a plurality of client systems;

- create a rental vehicle reservation in response to data received through the website from a client system;

- store a reservation transaction, wherein the reservation transaction is representative of the created rental vehicle reservation;

- accept additional data from a user for a potential rental of a rental vehicle based on the rental vehicle reservation;

- communicate an electronic rental proposal for display to the user, the electronic rental proposal being based on the rental vehicle reservation and the accepted additional data;

- create an electronic rental contract for a rental vehicle in response to an electronic acceptance by the user of the electronic rental proposal, thereby resulting in the user being able to bypass the rental counter when creating the electronic rental contract; and

- store a rental transaction, wherein the rental transaction is representative of the created electronic rental contract; and

- wherein the server system is further configured to perform the additional data acceptance, the communication, the electronic rental contract creation and the rental transaction storage regardless of whether the user has a pre-existing master rental agreement with the rental car company.

105. (new) The system of claim 104 wherein the server system is further configured to perform the additional data acceptance, the communication, the electronic rental contract creation and the rental transaction storage for a user who does not have a pre-existing master rental agreement with the rental car company.

106. (new) The system of claim 105 wherein the server system comprises a server subsystem and an automated kiosk located in the car rental facility, the kiosk in communication with the server subsystem, wherein the server subsystem is configured to communicate the electronic rental proposal to the kiosk for display thereon to the user, and wherein the kiosk is configured to receive the electronic acceptance of the electronic rental proposal from the user.

107. (new) The system of claim 106 wherein the kiosk is further configured to accept the additional data from the user.

108. (new) The system of claim 107 wherein the additional data comprises driver's license information for the user and credit card payment information for the user, and wherein the server system is further configured to:

- perform a first validation operation on the driver's license information such that the electronic rental proposal communication is not performed should the first validation operation indicate the driver's license information is invalid;

- should the first validation operation indicate the driver's license information is invalid, electronically request that the user re-submit new driver's license information;

- perform a second validation operation on the credit card payment information such that the electronic rental proposal communication is not performed should the second validation operation indicate the credit card payment information is invalid; and

- should the second validation operation indicate the credit card payment information is invalid, request that the user re-submit new credit card payment information.

109. (new) The system of claim 108 wherein the kiosk is further configured to receive identification information for the user, and wherein the server subsystem is further configured to:

retrieve the stored reservation transaction in response to the received user identification information; and

provide information about the retrieved reservation transaction to the kiosk for display thereon.

110. (new) The system of claim 109 wherein the kiosk is further configured to electronically solicit the additional data from the user.

111. (new) The system of claim 109 wherein the kiosk is further configured to receive a driver's license number from the user as the user identification information.

112. (new) The system of claim 109 wherein the kiosk comprises a printer, and wherein the server subsystem is further configured to deliver a print stream to the printer for printing a receipt and summary for the created electronic rental contract.

113. (new) The system of claim 112 wherein the print stream includes data for printing directions for the user to obtain a rental vehicle at the car rental facility in accordance with the created electronic rental contract.

114. (new) The system of claim 107 wherein the additional data comprises a modification of a data item from the reservation.

115. (new) The system of claim 105 wherein the additional data comprises driver's license information for the user, and wherein the server system is further configured to:

perform a validation operation on the driver's license information such that the electronic rental proposal communication is not performed should the validation operation indicate the driver's license information is invalid; and

should the validation operation indicate the driver's license information is invalid, electronically request that the user re-submit new driver's license information.

116. (new) The system of claim 115 wherein the driver's license information comprises an identification of a state for a driver's license and a plurality of digits that are representative of a driver's license number, and wherein the server system is further configured to perform the validation operation by checking whether the driver's license number digits conform to a valid digit pattern for the state corresponding to the state identification.

117. (new) The system of claim 105 wherein the additional data comprises credit card payment information for the user, and wherein the server system is further configured to:
perform a validation operation on the credit card payment information such that the electronic rental proposal communication is not performed should the validation operation indicate the credit card payment information is invalid; and
should the validation operation indicate the credit card payment information is invalid, electronically request that the user re-submit new credit card payment information.

118. (new) The system of claim 117 wherein the credit card payment information comprises a credit card number and name of a credit card holder, and wherein the server system is further configured to perform the validation operation by checking whether the credit card holder's name matches a name for a primary driver with respect to the potential rental.

119. (new) The system of claim 105 wherein the additional data comprises driver's license information for the user and credit card payment information for the user, and wherein the server system is further configured to:

perform a first validation operation on the driver's license information such that the electronic rental proposal communication is not performed should the first validation operation indicate the driver's license information is invalid;

should the first validation operation indicate the driver's license information is invalid, electronically request that the user re-submit new driver's license information;

perform a second validation operation on the credit card payment information such that the electronic rental proposal communication is not performed should the second validation operation indicate the credit card payment information is invalid; and

should the second validation operation indicate the credit card payment information is invalid, electronically request that the user re-submit new credit card payment information.

120. (new) The system of claim 105 wherein the additional data comprises a modification of a data item from the reservation.

121. (new) The system of claim 104 wherein the server system is further configured to:
after the reservation creation, receive input from the user indicative of a request to convert the created reservation into an electronic rental contract; and
responsive to the received input, provide a first web page of the website to a client system for display thereon, wherein the first web page is configured to solicit the additional data from the user.

122. (new) The system of claim 121 wherein the server system is further configured to:
after the reservation creation, provide a second web page of the website to the client system for display thereon, wherein the second web page is configured to provide the user with a user-selectable option to only create the reservation and a user-selectable option to convert the created reservation into an electronic rental contract; and
receive a user selection of the option to convert the created reservation into an electronic rental contract for thereby advancing the user to the first web page.

123. (new) The system of claim 121 wherein the server system is further configured to:
after the reservation creation, send an email to the user, wherein the email comprises (1) a confirmation of the created reservation, and (2) a user-selectable link that is effective upon user selection to link the user to the first web page; and
receive a user selection of the link.

124. (new) The system of claim 121 wherein the server system is further configured to automatically pre-fill at least a portion of the additional data into a web page of the website from a rental history associated with the user.

125. (new) The system of claim 124 wherein the server system is further configured to:
receive a selection by the user of a button on the web page; and
responsive to the button selection, perform the automatic pre-fill.
126. (new) The system of claim 121 wherein the server system is further configured to
automatically perform a suggestive sell for the potential rental through a web page of the
website based on a rental history associated with the user.
127. (new) The system of claim 124 wherein the suggestive sell is for an optional coverage
item for the potential rental.
128. (new) The system of claim 104 wherein the server system is further configured to:
for a user who has a pre-existing master rental agreement with the rental car company,
(1) provide a first web page of the website to a client system for display thereon, wherein the
first web page is configured to solicit the data for creating the reservation from the user, and (2)
automatically pre-fill at least a portion of the data for creating the reservation into the first web
page from the master rental agreement.
129. (new) The system of claim 128 wherein the server system is further configured to:
permit the user to electronically modify the pre-filled data without modifying the master
rental agreement.
130. (new) The system of claim 129 wherein the server system is further configured to:
receive a modification of the pre-filled data from the user through the website; and
notify the user with a selectable option to keep the modification and a selectable option
to revert to the pre-filled data.
131. (new) The system of claim 130 wherein the pre-filled data does not include credit card
information from the master rental agreement.

132. (new) A system for creating and storing an electronic rental contract for a rental vehicle such that a user need not visit a rental counter to create a rental contract when arriving at a car rental facility to pick up the rental vehicle, the system comprising:

- a server subsystem;

- a kiosk in communication with the server subsystem;

- wherein the server subsystem is configured to host a website, the website comprising a plurality of web pages for access over a network by any of a plurality of client systems;

- wherein the server subsystem is further configured to interact with a client system over the network and through the website to create a rental vehicle reservation;

- wherein the server subsystem is further configured to provide a first path and a second path for a user to convert a rental vehicle reservation into an electronic rental contract for a rental vehicle, the first path being a path through the website and the second path being a path through the kiosk;

- wherein the website is configured to permit a user of the client system to convert a rental vehicle reservation into an electronic rental contract for a rental vehicle via a plurality of web pages within a rental path of the website;

- wherein the server subsystem is further configured to provide the user with a plurality of options for entering the website's rental path, the plurality of options comprising an entry into the website's rental path immediately after creating a rental vehicle reservation and an entry into the website's rental path during a subsequent visit to the website after creating a rental vehicle reservation;

- wherein the kiosk is configured to permit the user to convert a rental vehicle reservation into an electronic rental contract for a rental vehicle via user interaction with the kiosk;

- wherein the server subsystem is further configured to create an electronic rental contract for a rental vehicle from a rental vehicle reservation in response to data input from any of the first and second paths; and

- wherein the electronic rental contract permits the user to avoid creating a rental contract at the rental counter when arriving at the car rental facility to pick up a rental vehicle in accordance with the electronic rental contract.

133. (new) The system of claim 132 wherein the server subsystem is further configured to create the electronic rental contract regardless of whether the user has a pre-existing master rental agreement with a rental car company.

134. (new) The system of claim 133 wherein the server subsystem is further configured to create the electronic rental contract for a user who does not have a pre-existing master rental agreement with the rental car company.

135. (new) The system of claim 133 wherein the server subsystem comprises a web server, a database, and a mainframe, wherein the web server is configured to host the website, wherein the database is configured to store data representative of the rental vehicle reservation and the electronic rental contract, and wherein the mainframe is configured to (1) execute reservation component software to create the rental vehicle reservation in response to data input from the client system through the website, and (2) execute rental component software to create the electronic rental contract in response to the data input from any of the first and second paths.

136. (new) A method of creating an electronic rental contract for a rental vehicle from a rental car company such that a user need not visit a rental counter to create a rental contract when arriving at a car rental facility to pick up the rental vehicle, the method comprising:

- storing data representative of a rental vehicle reservation, the stored data comprising data that associates the reservation with a user who does not have a pre-existing master rental agreement with the rental car company;

- receiving, through an automated kiosk located at a car rental facility, identification information for the user;

- retrieving the stored reservation data that is associated with the received user identification information;

- displaying, through the kiosk, an electronic rental proposal based on the retrieved reservation data;

- receiving, from the user through the kiosk, an electronic acceptance of the displayed rental proposal to thereby create an electronic rental contract, the electronic rental contract

permitting the user to avoid creating a rental contract at the rental counter when arriving at the car rental facility to pick up a rental vehicle in accordance with the electronic rental contract; and storing data representative of the created electronic rental contract.

137. (new) The method of claim 136 further comprising:
allocating a rental vehicle to the user at the car rental facility in accordance with the electronic rental contract without requiring the user to visit the rental counter.
138. (new) The method of claim 136 further comprising:
receiving, from the user through the kiosk, supplemental data for a potential rental based on the reservation; and
creating the electronic rental proposal based on the received supplemental data and the retrieved reservation data.
139. (new) The method of claim 138 wherein the received supplemental data comprises a modification of a data item from the reservation.